

Griffith, 5-Time Ring King, Seeks 6th Crown

BY DAN HAFNER

Times Staff Writer

There still is a bit of the boy in Emile Griffith, and it explains why after 17 years of boxing and purses totaling more than \$2 million the five-time world champion enthusiastically continues his career.

"I enjoy the life," said Griffith as he paused in preparation for his fight against Indian Red Lopez Thursday night at the Olympic. "Boxing has been wonderful to me. It's enabled me to see all those places in the world that I read about in history books. I like the money, sure, but mainly I just like the sport."

Griffith, 34, who won the welterweight title for the first time 11 years ago,

PUNCH LINES

says he wants to win a sixth title, either the middleweight again or the junior middleweight.

"Then," he added, "I'll say goodbye to my wonderful sport. I mean as a participant, but I will always remain around to help youngsters. Boxing doesn't owe me anything, but I owe it everything."

Only 21 KOs

There always has been a closeness between Griffith and Gil Clancy, the only manager he's had. Clancy says that it is enthusiasm, even for the dull routine of training, which keeps Griffith among the top contenders.

Griffith, while fighting all the outstanding welterweights and middleweights over the last decade, has scored 72 victories, but only 21 knockouts.

"I don't think that means he's not a hitter," said Clancy. "I think it's because most of the fighters he's met have been tough to knock out. Gaspar Ortega had never been knocked off his feet when Emile flattened him. And neither had Benny Paret the first time. Dick Tiger was knocked down for the first time by Emile."

Doesn't Look For KO

Griffith does not attach much importance to a flashy knockout record.

"If the opportunity presents itself," he said, "I try to take the man out. If I find out I can't, then I box him. You could ask some of my opponents and they would tell you they would have liked it better if I had put them away."

Griffith does not expect to knock out Lopez. They fought last May in Las Vegas with Griffith winning a split decision.

"I like Indian Red," said Griffith, "but not when we get in the ring. I just don't like anyone who is trying to hit me and that's what

he will be trying to do. He is tough and he's always there. You don't have to go looking for him. I like to fight someone like that."

Boxing Notes

The Muhammad Ali-Mac Foster fight in Tokyo will be the first one sent by satellite TV to this country. It will be shown Friday night at the Wilshire Theater, Shrine Auditorium and Valley Music Theatre at 7 . . . The Lopez-Griffith fight will not be on television. The Channel 13 main Thursday night will be between Thurman Darden, No. 3 junior middleweight, and Raul Rodriguez . . . The Forum's April 19 show, featuring top international bantamweights, takes on added importance since Rafael Herrera dethroned Ruben Olivares as champion. There are three bouts: Romeo Amaya, Mexico champion, vs. Italy's Franco Zurlo; Jairo Guerrero vs. Argentina's Helene Ferreyro and Famoso Gomez vs. Filipino Fernando Cabanella. The one who makes the best showing will meet Herrera for the title.

A cut hand has forced undefeated heavyweight George Foreman to be scratched from the April 3 boxing show at the Forum. Foreman had been scheduled to fight Cleveland's Vic Brown in the initial Channel 5 boxing show on Monday night. With Foreman out, the Forum boxing Club is now hoping to feature unbeaten Mike Quarry in the feature . . . Entries close Friday for the regional senior AAU tournament from which local fighters will be chosen for the Olympic tryouts. The tournament begins April 10 at Sacred Heart Hall in Pomona . . . Danny Lopez' next opponent may be Jose Luis Valdivinos in late April at the Olympic.

Jerry Quarry, whose disputed contract with manager Johnny Flores expires Friday, will then sign for a fight at the Forum April 10, probably against Charley Polite. It will be seen on home TV . . . Jose Luis Del Campo meets Apollo Yoshio at the Olympic April 8, while on the 13th, Jose Luis Garcia, the No. 6 heavyweight from Venezuela, returns to meet Roby Harris . . . Lopez will wind up heavy drills at Main Street Gym this morning at 11 and Griffith will follow at 2 p.m. . . . Windmill White faces Hill Chambers in Tucson April 8 . . .

JIM MURRAY

'Spoiling' for a Fight

When Emile Griffith first came up out of the Virgin Islands and walked into a gym, the fight mob couldn't have been more surprised if Shirley Temple showed up. They didn't know whether to give him boxing trunks or a tutu. They thought he might be looking for the road company of Swan Lake.

Nothing like him had ever showed up around 8th Ave. In the first place, he spoke in this high-pitched calypso. He lisped slightly. He could weep easily, pout when annoyed, and he made hats. The betting was he wore a stalk of bananas on his head at parties.

Fighters are supposed to be broken-nose guys with a rap sheet as long as "Gone With The Wind," speak as if they had a constant head cold, and, when they weren't in the ring they were in stir.

It was with no small measure of amazement that the guys with towels around their necks, carrying pails and swab-sticks watched this young man become one of the most savage and durable pugs in the history of the ring. It was as if Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm began poisoning her ponies.

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He even survived an on-camera killing. His fights were as one-sided as muggings. Emile was one rough customer in tights and boxing gloves. Outside, he was a mama's boy. Except, in his case, mama was not the movie type who sits at home wringing her hands because her boy was throwing away a career as a great milliner by risking his fingers, to say nothing of his brains, at fist fighting. Mama was at ringside, shaking her fist at the opponent, too.

Underestimating Emile Griffith became a way-of-life in the fight game. He was to become one of the great champions, winning and losing the welterweight title twice,

winning and losing the middle-weight title. In between, he fought light-heavies.

It is another strange twist in the career of Emile Griffith that he now finds himself cast in the role of a prize ring "spoiler." It is customary for great champions in the final rounds of their careers to choose opponents with great care. The idea is to make money without risking reputation. Emile Griffith will fight anybody. Always would. He is a pro, one of the greatest.

A "spoiler" ordinarily is an unorthodox guy who is just good enough to weed out pretentious fighters, and to test good-ones to the limit. Rarely is the role given to a prize fight legend like Griffith. A "spoiler" is the pugilistic equivalent of a guy who keeps spilling soup in the boss' lap. He's like the dog in the act who refuses to roll over and play dead, the lion who keeps yawning at the tamer, the magician's helper who keeps dropping the rabbit.

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Eager youngsters all over the world kept trying to get on Emile's dance card when they were sure he was "washed up." One by one, he sent them back to the gym for more work or back to the docks or gas stations. The list is long: Andy Heilman; Tom Bogs, the not-so-great Dane, Kitten Hayward, the Philadelphia "comer" (after Emile, instead of coming, he went), Armando Muniz and Nate Collins.

Emile is 34 now but the waist is still under 30. So are the legs. "I have," he says, "an old man's head but a young man's legs." The hair is thinning on the old man's head, but the eyes are wise, and the moves cunning. "Fighting him was like reading a book," Armando Muniz, confessed ruefully through his bloody nose after their fight.

Emile fights Indian Red Lopez,

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MURRAY'S COLUMN

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another spoiler, at the Olympic March 30. Emile fights for money now, not glory. There is a wife and a 3-year-old daughter back home in Weehawken. The earlier money, from the title shots, was lavished on a family that, on some nights, seemed to fill the garden.

He gets no over-anxious, eager youngster in Indian Red. It will be a rough, grueling fight with few mistakes by either. But Emile has had a hundred of these. In a sport that had "The Belting Brakeman," "The Livermore Butcher," "The Battling Bartender," the "Hammering Hat Designer" may be the toughest ever to lace on a glove. Certainly, he's the toughest ever to lace on a veil.

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JOHN HALL

A Crisis Over Legs

Emile Griffith, temporarily between titles, pranced through the door into the George Parnassus boxing office. He'd just finished his daily dozen down the hall in the ballroom gym at the Alexandria Hotel.

"So, you're the one," he squealed in his sing-song Virgin Islands English, pointing a finger under my chin. "You're the one who wrote that my legs are gone."

"I wrote it but I didn't say it. I was just quoting somebody else," I whined. "It was Eddie Futch who said it. You know, Eddie Futch, the trainer of Hedgemon Lewis."

Griffith's frown didn't disappear. "I don't like it," said the former three-time welter and two-time middleweight king. "Look at these legs. They're still right here with me. Do they look like they've gone someplace?"



Emile Griffith

I humbly confessed his legs looked beautiful, healthy, vibrant, alive — the great gams of a grand champion.

Emile suddenly smiled with satisfaction. "I was thinking of punching you on the nose," he said as he now moved across the room to inspect the gallery of pictures on the wall. He spotted one of himself — down on his pants on the canvas with Nino Benvenuti standing over him during an embarrassing moment in one of their middleweight title meetings.

"Get up, you fool, and fight," he screamed at himself on the wall. He was in a good mood.

"Was he kidding me?" I whispered to his manager, Gil Clancy.

"No," said Clancy. "Emile never kids about things like that. He's got so much pride. He was upset by the remark about him being washed up."

Clancy warmed to the subject. "Emile believes everything he reads," he said, recalling an incident prior to one of Griffith's early welterweight title defenses against Ralph Dupas in Las Vegas.

"Emile was a heavy favorite and tickets weren't selling too well," remembered Clancy. "We decided we'd better try to do something to stir up a little more interest."

Outraged by Own Insult

As the manager told it, he and Griffith met with Irwin Roscoe, publicist for the Dupas match.

"Why don't you get Dupas to rap Emile and call him a bum who can't fight?" Clancy suggested to the publicist.

"Beautiful," agreed Griffith, delighted with the plot.

So, the Vegas papers came out the next day with Dupas all over the sports sections, ridiculing Griffith, commenting that the champion didn't know how to box, that he was just an amateur and that he, Ralph Dupas, had never lost to an amateur in his life.

"It was perfect," said Clancy, who then handed the papers to Griffith. Mistake No. 1. Instant frenzy.

"He's calling me an amateur," screamed Griffith, completely forgetting he helped plan the insult. "How could Dupas say such a thing? I'll never forget this."

Anyway, Emile the Elegant, is back in town. He's here, of course, as part of the October welterweight festival about to break loose at the Sports Arena and Forum.

Indian Red Lopez and Lewis, the No. 1 and No. 2 contenders, tangle Saturday night in the co-feature on the Mando Ramos-Yoshiaki Numata lightweight title card at the Arena, while Griffith, two weeks from tonight, makes his bid to become welterweight champion for the fourth time against the current king, Jose Napoles, at the Forum.

"Lewis and Futch may have picked against us, but I'm picking Hedgemon over Indian Red," offered Clancy. "But I've got to say it, Emile has enough left to beat both Lewis and Lopez on the same night."

In his 12th year of professional boxing, Emile still has the flair, the elephant memory and all the same old intensity although an outlandish thing has happened to him lately. For the first time in nine years, he's operating without some sort of title—welter, junior middle or middleweight.

He first won the welter crown back in 1961 and has been a familiar fixture ever since. Benvenuti took his middle title last year. Counting all the divisions, the Napoles showdown will be his 20th world title battle.

"He never lost his welter title in the ring, you know," reminded Clancy. "They made him vacate it when he became middleweight champ in 1966. We're just reclaiming what should have belonged to us all along."

Salute to Santa Monica

Through all the good times and a few bad, Emile and Gil have been around—Vienna, Copenhagen, Rome, London, Honolulu, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Paris, New York, San Juan, Fresno and Sioux Falls, S.D.

"Santa Monica is still our all time favorite town," said Clancy. However, they are quartering this time near downtown at the Olympian so as to be closer to their gym facilities.

Griffith hasn't changed much over the years. He still doesn't have a mark on him. His clothes still stop traffic. The other day he showed up for lunch at the Playboy Club wearing a black velvet, two-piece matching pantsuit with bell bottoms, plus a gigantic white felt plantation hat. He's taken to carrying a toy stuffed dog around with him, a good luck charm.

He says now he's only 30, not 31 as listed in the record book, that he originally fibbed a year to get his first license. He looks good, sounds good. He's glad to be back and he's thriving on his latest challenge.

And if you would like to kid him about his toy dog, wild clothes or his age, you go right ahead. I've got enough problems just worrying about his legs.

As a matter of fact, who is Betty Grable? And whatever became of Ralph Dupas?

Paret Dies After 10-Day Fight for Life: PARET DIES OF INJURIES

Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File); Apr 3, 1962;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1989)
pg. B1

Paret Dies After 10-Day Fight for Life

NEW YORK (UPI) — Benny (Kid) Paret, after waging the toughest fight of his career, died today (1:55 a.m. EST) of a brain injury suffered in his savage welterweight title fight with Emile Griffith March 24.

The 24-year-old Cuban succumbed at Roosevelt Hospital. He was the first champion in boxing history to die of injuries received in a title bout.

Paret had been in a coma since he was punched senseless by the hammering fists of Griffith in the 12th round of the grudge fight at Madison Square Garden.

He was removed from the Garden on a stretcher and taken to Roosevelt Hospital, where he underwent a three-hour operation to relieve pressure on his brain caused by two massive blood clots.

Paret rallied slightly last Tuesday when doctors noted his reflexes had "become somewhat stronger," thus providing a ray

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PARET DIES OF INJURIES

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of hope for relatives and friends who had been praying for the recovery of the former champion. However, he contracted pneumonia Monday, adding to the odds against survival.

At Paret's bedside when he died were his wife, Lucy, who is expecting her second child in September, and his mother, Mrs. Maxima Crespo.

Mrs. Paret watched the Kid's last fight via television at their Miami Home. She flew to New York the following day with the couple's 2½-year-old son, Benny Jr. She maintained an almost constant vigil at her husband's bedside, leaving him only to nap on a couch in an adjoining room on the second floor of the hospital.

Mrs. Crespo was flown to his side last week after red tape was cleared to

get her a traveling visa out of Cuba.

Paret's tragic injuries produced new cries and crusades throughout the world to ban boxing.

Ruby Goldstein, who refereed the Kid's last fight, was criticized in many quarters for not stopping the bout sooner. However, he was held blameless by the New York state athletic commission in a post-fight report requested by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.

The commission report said Goldstein "acted in good judgment in stopping this contest when he did."

However, manager Manny Alfaro insisted Goldstein "was too slow in halting the machine-gun

punching of Griffith, who lost his title to Paret in their second fight in the same Garden ring last September.

Other boxing observers, though, felt Paret may have received initial brain damage either in his first fight with Griffith at Miami Beach last April, when the Kid was knocked out in the 13th round, or in his equally brutal brawl with NBA middleweight king Gene Fullmer last Dec. 9, when he was kayoed in the 10th round.

PARET SUFFERS BRAIN INJURY IN TITLE KO: Surgery Performed for Clot PARET KO'D, HURT

Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File); Mar 25, 1962;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1989)

pg. H1

PARET SUFFERS BRAIN INJURY IN TITLE KO

Surgery Performed for Clot

NEW YORK (UPI) — Stricken former welterweight champion Benny (Kid) Paret underwent delicate brain surgery early Sunday morning, less than two hours after he was beaten to a helpless hulk by Emile Griffith in their title bout at Madison Square Garden.

Paret, unconscious since the scheduled 13-round bout was stopped at 2:09 of the 12th round, went on the operating table at approximately 1 a.m., EST. He was rushed to Roosevelt Hospital by ambulance in "serious condition" after he was carried out of the Garden ring on a stretcher.

Last Rites

A priest administered the last rites of the Roman Catholic Church before Paret left the Garden and Dr. Harry Kleiman of the New York State Athletic Commission listed the Cuban fighter's condition as "serious." Dr. Alexander Schiff of the N.Y. State Athletic Commission performed the operation at Roosevelt Hospital.

Dr. Lawrence Schick, a brain surgeon at the hospital, said the 25-year-old Paret of Santa Clara, Cuba, suffered a cerebral laceration and that four holes would be made in his skull to remove pressure from a brain clot.

Cuban Helpless

Griffith, a 24-year-old native of St. Thomas, V.I., regained the welterweight title with a savage beating that ended with Paret helpless on the ropes, his head outside the ring, and with Griffith firing a hurricane of rights to the head and jaw.

Referee Ruby Goldstein finally leaped in and pulled Griffith off his helpless opponent.

"Paret's condition is grave but I do not think he will die," said the Cuban's manager Manuel Alfaro. "The referee should have stopped it sooner. I was shouting to him to stop it but he did not hear me."

Cranial Injury

"Paret was exhausted when the punch caught him and left him helpless. I do not think it was any carry-over from Paret's fight with Gene Fullmer."

Griffith, who had won and then lost the welterweight title against Paret in two previous bouts, was so wild with the exultation of victory that he apparently

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PARET KO'D, HURT

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He did not realize Goldstein had stopped the bout. He had to be forcibly stopped from continuing the bout even while Paret lay motionless in the neutral corner.

Griffith, weighing 144 lb. to Paret's 146½, dominated the bout from the opening bell except for one electric instant 15 seconds before the end of the sixth round when Benny caught him with a left hook to the jaw and dropped him for a mandatory eight-count.

Paret might have knocked out the stunned Griffith if he had more time left in the round—but the bell sounded and Benny's chance to retain the title went with it.

Rights to Jaw

Griffith, slashing away at the champion both to the head and body, regained control of the bout in the seventh round and he had Benny bleeding early in the 12th after an exchange on the ropes.

Then he suddenly caught Paret with a right to the jaw and the champion sagged back against the ropes in a neutral corner. Griffith was on him like a tiger and brought right upper cut after right upper cut to Paret's undefended jaw.

Paret sagged back against the corner and his head went through the ropes as Griffith continued his attack.

Griffith, who lost the title to Paret on a disputed decision at the Garden last Sept. 30, took command of the fight from the opening bell. He scored with hard rights in both the first and second rounds, opened a cut under Paret's right eye in the third round and continued the bombardment through the fourth and fifth rounds.

Paret Married

Paret, a native of Santa Clara, Cuba, bought a home in Miami about six months ago and planned to become an American citizen. He is married and has a 2-year-old son, Benny Jr.

The onetime sugar cane cutter, who turned 25 just 10 days ago, has been fighting pro since 1955.

Paret won the welterweight title by outpointing Don Jordan in 15 rounds May 27, 1960. He successfully defended it against Federico Thompson of Argentina on another decision Dec. 10, 1960.

A crowd of 7,600 paid a gross gate of \$27,000. Griffith fought for \$10,000 plus 20% of the gate while Paret defended for \$50,000 or 40% of the gate, whichever was higher.